RED & BLACK

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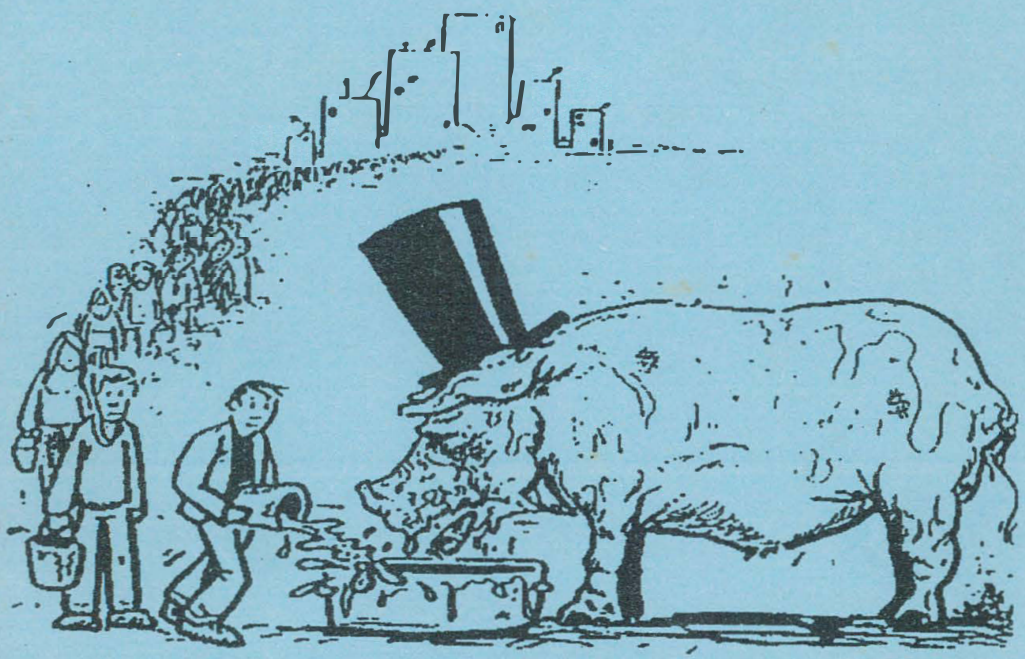

The road to

Neo-liberalism

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REVISITING BULGARIA

Revisiting Bulgaria is one thing, giving an objective account - a different one. I have to guard myself against my own hidden emotions and fight the temptation to project them into the reality of my observations. The best I can do is to try a libertarian account of the situation.

As a prelude, I may mention the following. All marks of my libertarian past are erased. My childhood lies in my memory without any external signs to corroborate it. Also, my hopes to see a flourishing anarchist revival have been dashed by the marasmus of social relations, hardly propitious for libertarian manifestations.

Under the yoke of Bolshevism the classical Protagoras' maxim: "Man is the measure of all things" had been translated into "Man is measured by material possessions only, and it is they that determine h/er significance" By imprisoning the imagination and reducing the individual to pauperism by the "materialistic" interpretation of history, the Bolsheviks succeeded in creating the new "socialist" person: without personality, a slave and a cog in the gigantic state machinery, unable to participate in making h/er own history and even less able to arrange h/er own life. In this Cimmerian culture any change is a scary venture. Security is preferred to freedom. Instead of independence, people whose life has been marred by the gospel of Marxist-Leninism, after the collapse of their idols, grabbed the opportunity to manifest their subservience to the new masters by waving the gospel of the New World Order. In such a background the anarchist congress took place.

The congress was well attended, some 300 delegates at least, about a quarter of whom were women. A lot of enthusiasm but it echoed a past. While in the past there were ample opportunities for a wild regeneration of anarchism the Bolshevik long winter buried such possibilities. The Bolsheviks used all means to wipe out any revolutionary tendency and more specifically anarchism. They had tried to ensure that no revolutionary force could resurrect out of the ashes of destruction. This to a great extend explains the lack of youth participation at the congress. A sad reality! And no delegate missed an opportunity to stress it but it was a rather rhetorical issue since no serious analysis was advanced.

Another aspect was that many comrades used the podium to lecture about anarchism to anarchists and to reiterate the fundamental principles of anarchism. Thus considerable precious time was wasted. The time would have been better employed to try to establish a common premise for activities aiming to implant anarchism in present day conditions. Instead there were many references to the past practices, forgetting that 50 years ago is not 50 years after. Perhaps this was a cover for their own disappointment.

Fifty years ago it was youth. Today white hair was a predominant feature of the congress. There was plenty of enthusiasm and the hearts were at the right place but something was missing. The burden of work was on the shoulders of old comrades whose energies were withering away. Definitely they were enjoying the twilight of their existence but their eyes were clouded by sadness, an anguish, perhaps a fear that their sunset will be enveloped in eternal silence. They, who survived the Bolshevik holocaust, who passed through fire and hell, and who put so much time to revive anarchism as an alternative, are, it appears, condemned to oblivion, not as persons but as anarchists. They are aware that a movement without youth is a sunset without sunrise and unless there are depositories of memories the Phoenix cannot arise from the ashes.

Nonetheless, this pessimism was accompanied by some hopes. After the catacombs of the Bolshevik's era any light will dazzle the spirit. The baits of liberal capitalism with its promisses of earthly paradise appeases the minds of the have-nots and their longing for a brighter future. But since the New World Order and I.M.F are not interested in peoples' wellbeing they will not be able to deliver the goods. Perhaps at this point the baits will be seen as a bitter pill and the consciousness will awake to anguis in herba /a snake in the grass/.

In my view, at the opening day, a lot of precious time was allotted to the representatives of various political parties who described their various platforms. With the exception of a social democrat and a section of the agrarian party, the rest hardly could see the anarchist point of view less so perceive anarchism as an alternative to the authoritarian social make-up. As to the invited journalists, nothing came out in the press. Perhaps the spectre of anarchism still haunts the new and old bourgeois and their lackeys. Therefore, they prefer silence to seal the lips of enquiries. In the afternoon there was a lengthy paper giving an historical account of anarchism and of anarch-

ist doctrine and principles . This paper concluded that anarchism has a future since it is the only viable alternative to oppression.

After this paper there was discussion about the future of anarchism. This discussion was resumed on the second day. The gist of it all was that there is a need for anarchist activities in the work place, the community, the universities and so forth and the virtual impossibility of this happening given the lack of a new generation of anarchist activists. Another issue that failed to be addressed satisfactorily was the circulation of the printed word and access to it by the largest possible number of people.

This stated, in no way am I condemning the comrades many of whom really work hard to make anarchism a viable social proposition. But the facts remain: age is taking its toll. And no abnegation, dedication, faith, enthusiasm can prevent what is not preventable: the disappearance.

This harsh reality within which Bulgarian anarchists operate is due to the fact that years of totalitarianism has destroyed personal singularities and undermined any autonomous affirmations. The individual was incorporated into authoritarian relationships and accommodated to hierarchical structures in service of the giant octopus -the Party. Within those precincts the individual underwent sessions of castration to become a respectful member of society and a faithful servant of Big Brother.

The armour forged by such a society had devastating social and personal consequences. A glance at liberal-democratic benevolent terrorism is, perhaps, sufficient to provide some insight into the naked terrorism of the Party-State. To get rid of the fear of terror and to dismantle the armature that strangles the person, to change a non-identity identity grounded on authoritarian moralism and the ethics of obedience is a complex process. It is easier to talk of revolutionary awakening, advancing libertarian propositions and insist on emancipation but it is more difficult to try to establish a genuine revolutionary praxis and autonomy. For an authoritarian revolutionary, for whom an ideological unity is a priority, coercion is a tool but it cannot apply to anarchism.

The collapse of Bolshevism created a vacuum which was quickly filled with other icons and beliefs to prevent any revolutionary

social project. Again the people missed the point to capture the reins of their own destiny. Understandably! Victims of a slave mentality, atomised by a deliberate policy, they were easily manipulated by their ex-masters, now dressed in the attire of liberal socialists, whose "peaceful coexistence" metamorphosed into a collaboration with national and international capitalism to prevent revolutionary possibilities. The people! They were left with their soporific medicine and ideological hallucinations. And the old capitalist order now baptised as The New World Order appears to the poor as a future heaven of happiness, plenty and luxuries. The only hurdle they see is the lack of quick privatisation.

Privatisation! It is in Bulgaria that I've seen the authentic face of this tragic farce. It is an ugly phenomenon. Rampant exploitation. Homo homini lupus! Long hours of work and sometimes without pay. Accidents are the workers' responsibility while hospitals are beyond their reach. The poor cannot afford hospitalisation. Luxury is a pornographic commodity enjoyed by a few in the background of abject poverty. Prices are so high that many people live on saliva rather than food. Doctors are extortionists. So privatisation is a bonanza for a few and a scourge for the majority. And yet the I.M.F. demands more rigid measures if Bulgaria is to get more loans. Loans that will fill the coffers of the new bourgeoisie and privatisation that will guarantee the freedom of people to starve to death.

Now the ex-Marxist-Leninist revolutionary avant-garde, by restructuring the capitalist economy, are restructuring their share of the plunder, but as private citizens. Their lyric of the revolution is rewritten to the tune of the New World Order. Banks are mushrooming! Business is flourishing. The spoils that ex-party functionaries and apparatchiks exported are coming back to the country as investments for their own benefit. Excellent methods! Day light banditry! And a better yoke for their dear proletariat. The new bourgeoise-red cowboys are chewing the surplus value of the nation in the final synthesis of capitalism.

On the other side revolutionary trade-union consciousness among the workers is absent. Anarcho-syndicalism has no impact whatsoever since it was eliminated by the paladins of socialist realism now the knights of the New World Order. The workers in particular, and people in general, lack perspectives for a genuine revolutionary transformation. Submerged for so long in party slogans they are very

submissive and prefer to operate within what is permissible by their exploiters and rulers. Thus their project is not to transcend State, hierarchy and inequality but to substitute new idols, gurus or kings for them.

In conclusion I have to say that despite my longing to see the spreading of anarchism in Bulgaria, we have to recognise the cruel facts. Bolshevik terrorism destroyed the vision of a future anarchist society and also any vestiges of revolutionary changes. By making communism a religion it perverted revolutionary thought, action and praxis. The desert, I hope it is a temporary phenomenon, that followed its collapse makes the task of the Bulgarian anarchists a difficult enterprise since cultural conditions are absent for an anarchist venture.

Jack

ANARCHIST ART

Works of art with anarchist themes and anarchist forms is not the same as art containing anarchist slogans. The latter includes certain poems by Kenneth Rexroth, Jackson Mac Low, or even Jenny Holzer, who write phrases that can be understood, or interpreted, as anarchist but are formally no different from newspaper headlines, which are not art - just newspaper headlines. Another artful masterpiece written by an anarchist is Emma Goldman's *Living My Life* (1930), which finally conveys not anarchist themes but the story of individual accomplishment over severe adversities. Instead, let us consider art that is distinctly anarchist in plot, anarchist in image, and anarchist in form.

An example of the first familiar to us all is Henry Miller's multi-volumed novel, which portrays self-liberation from society and the discovery of an instinctual self that cannot be socialised by outside forces, whether they be institutions, bureaucracies, employers, or marriage. I speak from personal experience, having read Miller while in college and even completing an honours thesis on his work in 1962, just as his best books were becoming commonly available here; for his book certainly affected my continued resistance to all those socialising antagonists.

A less familiar example of anarchist plot appears in Clayton Patterson's great videotape about the Tomkins Square Riot of 1988. Using an extremely portable video camera, held on his hip, and the natural lighting of a hot summer New York night, Patterson portrays the police attempt to disrupt a people's protest against the closing of a Lower East Side park that had become the last refuge of the homeless. As more and more cops come, Patterson's camera portrays them looking anxiously at one another, visually revealing the truth that officials later made public - that the policemen did not know what they were supposed to do. After many taunting screams and some violent exchanges, all intimately portrayed, a tall man in civilian clothes arrives, surveys the scene, and with a flick of his head instructs the police to retreat back into the buses that take them home. The film ends with the people retaking the park as the sun comes up.

Another unfamiliar example of anarchist plot is Lee Baxandall's play *Potsy* (1963), which tells of the local power monopoly's attempt to electrify an outhouse over its owner's objections. In collusion with the state, which has no doubt authorised that all man-made constructions be electrically serviced, Consolidated, Incorporated, intimidates a reluctant customer. In response, Baxandall's protagonist Potsy lays his body on the pot, so to speak:

> Pay yet some attention, workmen. Loka! Piszok Baika loka! Brudy! Mykja mykja! Skita. Cacones cacones. Alhorre zulla szenny! Saasta bagla gaika, vaika. Lort, plehna.Lort lort lort lort lort lort! Kunya suka zurullo! Suka! (*The gestures grow more anguished.)* Szar ulosteet! Oosee oosee oosee cacones! Sprosnosc meconio. Mykjaa cach cauch, ossee oosee. Caakaaaaah!Track smuts. Aolach! Inneir,teyl fegradh shijt, mon. Gaorr, salachar. Orenlighet orenlighet, cac cac! Bee-Emmm. oosee, oosee. oosee, ooseeee-gamees! porcheria porcheria porcheria porcheria! Bouse crotte etron selles, gavno, crottin. Selles scheiss ficate, guano. Gavnoh sporchezza! Gavnoh! plot plop dump gamees! Gamees gamees gamees gamees! Feung feung, cacaaah! Pez. Inmundicia (etc)

Though Baxandall thought himself a Marxist at the time, even compiling a bibliography of Marxist esthetics (and later editing the mostly Marxist *Radical Perspectives in the Arts* [1972]), it seemed

to me clear at the time that the thrust of *Potsy* was anarchist, saying that society has no right to invade a human being's throne. So I was scarcely surprised that Baxandall went on to wrtie guides to nude beaches, which is, needless to say, another kind of outhouse that authoritarians and their ally the state want to shut down.

An example of art with an anarchist image is the Living Theater's *Paradise Now* (1968). It is structured as a series of challenges to the audience, in which the performers scream slogans that are not ends in themselves but provocations designed to make the audience respond. "I'm not allowed to travel without a passport." "I'm not allowed to smoke marijuana." When they scream, "I'm not allowed to take my clothes off," some spectators respond by undressing and others not, creating an image in which some are liberated and others not. A second anarchist image so vivid in my head has audience members leaping off the stage into the crossed arms of several men. Both the nudity and leaping into the air are images of liberation, which is what the paradise of *Paradise Now* is all about. (The leaping image resembles a famous Yves Klien photograph of himself, but without the context that, for the Living Theater, makes leaping political.) It is indicative that when the Internal Revenue Service closed the Living Theater in the fall of 1963, they were rehearsing a production of Baxandall's *Potsy!*

The master of anarchist form was John Cage, who from early in his career made sound pieces without climaxes, without definite beginnings and ends, without boundaries. Another characteristic is that they were performed by individuals functioning as equals. Looking back over his entire work, to the beginning of his career in the 1930's, you'll find him never employing a conductor who makes interpretative decisions. (His conductors, instead, merely keep time, not even beat.) Nor does Cage allow solo performers to stand out from the background group.

His pieces are customarily characterised as chaotic, but in their chaos is their politics. On the floor of HPSCHD, performed in a humongous basketball arena, were seven amplified harpsichordists each with different scores. Two had different collages of harpsichord music from Mozart to the present; three had differently fixed versions of Mozart's "Introduction to the Composition of Waltzes by Means of Dice." One more harpsichordist played "computer print-out for twelve-tone gamut," while the last keyboard operator had nothing

more specific than blanket instruction to play any Mozart he wished. Around the arena Cage distributed fifty-two tape machines, each playing tapes of computer-composed sound in fifty-two different scales (ranging from five tones to an octave to fifty-six tones). With so many disparate sound sources the result could only be microtonal din. If you listen to the recording made of this piece, that is what you hear. For the original performance Cage added a profusion of images from both slides and film. What is portrayed in this and in other Cage pieces is individuals working together and apart, each acting on his or her own authority, in concert with others, all without a conductor. In these respects, HPSCHD and other Cagean pieces become models of an anarchist society.

He was always an anarchist. When Cage was first invited to write music to accompany a text, back in the eary 1940s, the writer he first approached was Henry Miller. Since Miller's obscenity proved problematic, Cage chose another writer whose politics were likewise anarchist, Kenneth Patchen; and when setting writers' texts, Cage frequently favored the poetry of E.E. Cummings, whose politics were, to my mind, mostly anarchist as well. Consider not only *The Enormous Room* (1922), which is easily available, but the prose masterpiece that has long been out of print, *Eimi* (1933), which is a critical report of his 1931 trip to Russia. In the recently published collection of letters between Cage and Pierre Boulez in the late 1940s is Cage's charming proposal for "a society called Capitalists, Inc. (so that we will not be accused of being Communists). Everyone who joins has to show that he has destroyed not less than 100 disks of music or one sound recording device; also everyone who joins automatically becomes President." Making every member a king, Capitalists, Inc., would, of course, be another anarchist community.

Not unlike other anarchist art, Cage's work is essentially comedic; for whereas tragedy portrays what should not happen, comedy is about possibilities, not only in life but in art. If you say, as I do, that nothing is more politically profound than anarchist comedy, then you could expand the canon of anarchist art to include the art of the Marx Brothers, Spike Milligan, and even Bugs Bunny.

If a work of art is to be truly anarchist, its means corresponding to its ends, it must be anarchist in its plot, anarchist in its images, or anarchist in its form.

Richard Kostelanetz

Richard Wagner and the Anarchist Movement

On 2 February 1843, after years of poverty and debts, Richard Wagner was appointed the second of two Kapellmeisters (conductors) to the Court of the King of Saxony at Dresden. The appointment gave an assured income for life, a social position which greatly pleased his wife, and time to compose; it was intended as support for a composer of promise. Copyright did not exist and a Court appointment was the most common way for a composer to earn a living. Liszt was Kapellmeister to the Grand Duke of Weimer; Meyerbeer was Kapellmeister to the King of Prussia. Wagner had already composed *Rienzi* and *The Flying Dutchman.* He was working on *Tannhauser* at the time of his appointment and it was premiered in Dresden in October 1845. *Lohengrin* followed and was finished in April 1848.

Wagner did not fit comfortably into the position of Kapellmeister. He was a musical and theatrical innovator and his vigorous efforts to reform and improve the court orchestra and theatre antagonized his superiors. News of his appointment spread among his old creditors and he was pressed for payment of his debts. His salary was insufficient to pay them.

During the periods 1847-1851 there was a wave of revolution, and then counter-revolution, across the continent of Europe. Properly speaking it may have begun with a civil war in Switzerland in 1847 in which radicals defeated conservatives. However the beginning of the revolutionary period is usually taken as February 1848 when revolution broke out in Paris, the political centre of Europe. King Louis-Philippe abdicated and fled and a republic was proclaimed. The impact of this was felt across Europe. Mass meetings and street demonstrations demanding political change took place in March 1848 in Munich, Vienna, Budapest, Venice, Cracow, Milan and Berlin. Outside Paris the demonstrators generally did not want a republic but constitutional monarchy along British lines, that is, civil rights and parliamentary democracy. The European monarchs and their advisors gave way to the pressure, appointing liberal instead of conservative ministers and making moves towards parliamentary democracy, and then as time went on, manoeuvred to suppress the revoltionary/reform movement and make a return to absolutism. In France Napoleon's nephew was elected president but later made himself emperor in a

coup d'etat.

The four political forces at work at the time were conservatism, liberalism, radicalism and nationalism. Conservatives wanted to maintain the status quo. Liberals wanted parliamentary democracy and civil rights. Radicals wanted destruction of the existing social order in the hope that it would be followed by a utopian society based on mechanization of production. Nationalists in some cases agitated for a separate country, e.g. separation of Hungary from Austria, and in other cases (Germany, Italy) for national unification. The four forces were sometimes opposed and sometimes intertwined - for example Bakunin was a radical Slav nationalist.

In Dresden in March 1848 Wagner welcomed King Friedich August's appointment of a liberal government but was concerned primarily with the implications of political change for the opera house. He drew up plans for a national theatre and proposed that administration of the opera house and orchestra should be transferred from the court bureaucracy to a government department, thus placing it under the control of elected representatives of the people.

Wagner's political consciousness was raised by his friendship with August Rockel, who had been appointed assistant conductor at Dresden in 1843. Under Rockel's influence he joined the more radical of two political societies which had been formed in Dresden, the Vaterlandsverein, wrote an unsigned newspaper article under the title "What relation do republican aims bear to the monarchy?" and delivered this as a speech before thousands of people in a public park. His speech supported the utopian aspirations of the time, criticised the court, and urged the king to place himself at the head of the movement for change. The speech caused a sensation and he took leave to go to Vienna, then in the grip of revolutionary fervour, to explore the possibilities for theatrical reform there. By the time he returned to Dresden the fuss caused by his speech had died down.

In September 1848 there were constant rumours of a reactionary coup d'etat and to combat this threat Rockel wrote an appeal to the Saxon army, had it printed, and distributed it in all directions. For this he was sacked from his job and arrested for treason. After three days in jail he was released on bail and continued to agitate. On long walks he and Wagner took together he converted Wagner to Proudhon's theories. Wagner pondered the possibilities of achieving his artistic aims in a post-revolutionary society. Rockel, to

further the revolutionary cause and to gain some income to support his family, started publishing a radical newspaper, the *Volksblatt.*

Elections were held and Rockel became a member of the Saxon parliament, thereby gaining immunity from prosecution.

Throughout this period Wagner was in contact with Bakunin, who was in hiding as a guest of Rockel. Wagner entertained him at dinner occasionally and went on regular walks with him. Wagner seems to have been much more impressed with Bakunin than Bakunin was with Wagner. Wager's autobiography devotes six pages to Bakunin; Bakunin's *Confession* makes no mention of Wagner. However Bakunin admired Wagner's conducting. After a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony Bakunin approached Wagner to say that if all music were to be lost in the coming world conflagration, "we should risk our lives to preserve this symphony".

Wagner knew that he was disliked by the court and by the Spring of 1849 felt that his position as Kapellmeister was coming to an end. As the revolutionary movement gathered momentum he saw his own fate as interwoven with the universal unrest, and felt impelled to give himself up to the stream of events, wherever it might lead.

On 1st May 1849 the King appointed a new and reactionary council of ministers and dissolved parliament. Rockel lost his immunity from prosecution and fled to Bohemia to avoid arrest. To help support Rockel's family Wagner took over production of the *Volksblatt* . An article Wagner wrote for the *Volksblatt* , "The Revolution", shows just how radical his views were. The views expressed are attributed to a deity of Wagner's invention, the Goddess of Revolution, but there is no doubt that Wagner was endorsing massive destruction of the existing order to make way for a utopian society.

Wagner's autobiography gives a detailed account of the Dresden revolution which began on May 3rd 1849 and lasted for a week. When the bellls of St. Ann's church rang to signal the beginning of revolt Wagner felt "great, almost extravagant satisfaction". He portrays his own role as largely that of a sympathetic spectator but it was more than this. It was known that the Saxon king and his ministers planned to suppress the revolution by bringing in Prussian troops. Wagner had posters printed to appeal to the Saxon

soldiers, which said "Are you with us against the foreign troops?" organized their posting on barricades, and distributed them during a cease fire to Saxon soldiers stationed outside the palace. (The king and his court had been evacuated to a fortress up the river.) He wrote: "Of course no one took any notice of these placards except intending informers".

A provisional government consisting of some members of the dissolved parliament was proclaimed. Rockel returned from Bohemia to help. Bakunin emerged from hiding. At first he wandered around poking fun at the naivety and and inefficiency of the revolution. Later he was sufficiently impressed by the actions of Heubner, the leader of the provisional government, to pledge support and took a leading role.

The charges later brought against Wagner were that he had been intimate with the leaders of the revolution; that he had attended meetings of revolutionary conspirators, some held in his own garden; that he had ordered the manufacture of hand grenades; that he had attempted to seduce Saxon troops from their duty, thereby committing treason; and that he was seen to be present at the Town Hall during the election of the provisional government, at watch on a church tower, and in the company of revolutionary reinforcements.

After a week of fighting the revolutionary forces decided to abandon Dresden and withdraw to a centre where reinforcements could be concentrated. The leaders of the provisional government were lured into a trap by the Chemnitz town guard and arrested. Wagner missed arrest only because he travelled separately and stayed at a different hostel in Chemnitz. Wagner escaped first to Weimar, where he had support from Liszt, and then to Switzerland. Bakunin, Heubner and Rockel were sentenced to death but their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. Heubner served ten years in prison and Rockel thirteen. Bakunin was tried and convicted in turn by the governments of Saxony and Austria and then handed over to the Russian government which had previously convicted and sentenced him in his absence. He was imprisoned in the Peter and Paul fortress and then transferred to exile in Siberia, from where he escaped to London. Wagner later wrote that his revolutionary experience had shaken him to the depths of his being.

The Ring

Wagner's largest and greatest work is the set of four operas

called *The Nibelung's Ring,* or *The Ring* for short. The period of the Dresden revolution coincided with the germination of *The Ring* in Wagner's mind. When he conjured up a Goddess of Revolution he was already thinking about Brunhilde. Wagner was in the habit of writing extensively about his musical plans. In the summer of 1848 he wrote an essay called *The Nibelungs: World History as Revealed in Saga*. In October 1848 he wrote a prose outline of the plot of *The Ring, The Nibelung Myth as the Scenario for a Drama*. In November 1848 he wrote the verse for *Siegfried's Tod,* which is the basis for the last of the four *Ring* operas, *Gotterdammerung*. In exile in Switzerland he completed the poem of *The Ring* in 1852. He began composition of the first opera, *Das Rheingold* in 1853 and finished it in 1854. *Die Walkure* was composed over the period 1854 to 1856, and *Siegfried* was begun in 1856. Then Wagner set the *Ring* project aside to work on two other operas, *Tristan and Isolde* and *The Mastersingers* . Composition of the ring was not finished until 1874.

Wagner began work on *The Ring* as a committed revolutionary and remained a committed revolutionary in the early stages of his work on it in his exile in Switzerland. In late 1851, two years after the Dresden revolution, he wrote to a friend: "The whole of my political creed is nothing but the bloodiest hatred of our whole civilization, contempt for everything that springs from it, and longing for nature... Everything in our country is riddled with servility: there is nobody in all France who knows that we are nonetheless human beings, except perhaps Proudhon - and even he is none too clear about it! - In all Europe I prefer dogs to these doglike people. And yet I do not despair of the future; but only the most fearful and destructive of revolutions can make our civilized beasts 'human' again".

George Bernard Shaw in *The Perfect Wagnerite* argued that *The Ring* is an anarchist and revolutionary parable. This was substantially the view of the centenary production at Covent Garden in London in 1976. Deryck Cooke, the leading Wagner scholar of this century, thought that Shaw was right about the politics of *The Ring* but that *The Ring* is also about love. He also thought that there was some substance in Donington's Jungian interpretation. *The Ring* is complex and profound and can be - and these days is - interpreted in many different ways, but it is wrong to overlook its origins as a critique of nineteenth century capitalism and its aspirations for a utopian future for humanity. We still live in a capitalist world and in a good production *The Ring* can be made what Shaw said it is, "a

drama of today, and not of a remote and fabulous antiquity."

According to the Shavian view *The Ring* tells the story of humanity, in very abstract, symbolic and psychological terms, from the beginnings of civilization. Alberich's theft of the gold in the first scene represents the beginning of money. The cataclysm at the end represents the revolutionary downfall of an epoch in human history. The first opera, *The Rhinegold,* is the most clearly political of the four.

Shaw argued that Siegfried was modelled on the character of Bakunin. One of Wagner's biographers, von Westernhagen, wrote: "it is ludicrous to call Wagner a Bakuninist and to see a portrait of Bakunin in his Siegfried, as Bernard Shaw did. But it only needs an intelligent mind to propose an amusing paradox for ten less intelligent ones to spring up and adopt it in all seriousness."

Without a film or recording of Bakunin in his prime we can only guess at the resemblance between Siegfried and Bakunin. However, Siegfried is a tenor, and Bakunin, as Wagner and others have described him, sounds more like a man who would be represented on the operatic stage by a deep voice, by a baritone or even one of those magnificent bases which Russia excels in producing.

Wagner's Monarchism

During the period leading up to the Dresden revolution the question "monarchy or republic?" was much debated. Despite his radicalism Wagner was firmly monarchist. Wagner's monarchism may have had a basis in self-interest, since monarchs were patrons of music. It may also have had a basis in his dislike of politicians. In a letter he wrote in 1852 to Liszt he said (concerning a character in *Lohengrin*) "A male politician disgusts us; a female politician appals us". (Wagner also disliked clergymen, despite his interest in religion; at different times he proposed writing operas about Jesus and about Buddhism.)

Monarchs were good to Wagner. During his flight from arrest, while staying with Liszt in Weimar, he was received in a friendly fashion by the Grand Duchess, who was also a sister of the Tsar. Liszt told him that she had heard that a warrant for his arrest was about

to be issued and she wanted to meet him before she would be compromised by doing so. While still wanted for treason in the German confederation he travelled from his base in Switzerland to London to conduct concerts. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert came to a concert and received him in a very friendly fashion at interval, asking after his wife and pets. Queen Victoria wrote in her diary: "He conducted in a peculiar way, taking Mozart's and Beethoven's Symphonies in quite a different time to what one is accustomed. His own overture to 'Tannhauser' is a wonderful composition, quite overpowering, so grand, in parts wild, striking and descriptive. We spoke to him afterwards. He is short, very quiet, wears spectacles and has a very finely shaped forehead, a hooked nose and projecting chin."

The Emperor of Brazil was an admirer and invited Wagner to Brazil. Wagner did not go. The Emperor attended the first performance of *The Ring* in 1876, stayed at a hotel, and wrote "emperor" in the column headed "occupation" in the hotel register.

In middle age Wagner needed a lot of support and a lot of gratification to continue the labour of composition. In April 1864, with *The Ring* still unfinished, Wagner was in desperate financial circumstances and wrote to a friend: "My condition is very disquieting. It's balanced on a knife edge: a single push and that will be the end, and there will be nothing more to come from me, nothing, nothing more! A light must shine, a man must come, who will help me whole heartedly, now - while I still have the strength to use his help; or else it will be too late, I feel it!" The young King Ludwig of Bavaria, who had succeeded to the throne a month earlier on the sudden death of his father, and was a passionate admirer of Wagner's music, almost simultaneously sent his cabinet secretary off to find Wagner, who was in hiding from creditiors. King Ludwig from then on provided Wagner with a vast amount of money, enough to live very comfortably and to get his operas performed, and also continuous encouragement.

Bakunin tried to advance the anarchist cause after his escape. Wagner's enthusiasm for revolution seems to have waned after the 1850s. Wagner was first and foremost always a composer and dramatist, and devoted his life to producing the works he believed he could write. As time went on he became very weary of the world and in his anti-semitism a kind of proto-nazi. When *The Ring* was first

performed its audience was not the post-revolutionary common people Wagner had first envisaged, but crowned heads and the wealthy. He wrote one last opera, *Parsifal,* a mysterious, vaguely Christian work, and died without composing the symphonies he had planned.

Ian Firth

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THE CORPORATE STATE AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS

How do we get from Exxon, Philip Morris, and du Pont to Woody Guthrie? Here are three initial contentions. The first is that the US corporate state employs powerful weapons to maintain its power. The second is that the Bill of Rights and especially the First Amendment are valiant but insufficient instruments of freedom. And the third is that the rights affirmed in the First Amendment, if they are to provide a true marketplace of ideas, must be reinforced by numerous other instruments of liberty created by the people.

The Corporate State

By the corporate state I mean the structures of power that control information and opinion in the US, the institutions especially of corporations and the government in alliance. My thesis is that media contents and thus opinion derive from the exercise of power over the presentation and interpretation of reality.

John Kenneth Galbraith in his book The Anatomy of Power argues that power derives from three sources: pecuniary, coercive, and persuasive. His first principle is that in a democracy, the front line of conformity is the workplace. In a country where jobs are guaranteed, force is more necessary to compel conformity: in the US people are kept in line, consensus is maintained, mainly by the threat of unemployment, or withholding a raise, or a bad job assignment. Here is an example that illustrates many aspects of this first principle as it applies to corporations and the media. One of the writers of the Barney Miller TV police series included a reference in one segment to criminal dumping of toxic wastes by chemical companies. Dow Chemical company was one of the sponsors of the show; an employee of the company read all scripts in advance of showing; the company ordered the line removed, and the writer was reprimanded. You will say, what a fool he was? And that's exactly my point. Extremely seldom is a powerful institution criticized on TV, not because it directly censors, but because it rarely has to, for self-censorship prevails: the mainstream media do not hire critics of the system, and if they accidentally do, those individuals, as we say, are not foolish enough to risk their jobs.

Galbraith's second principle deals with coercion. Since [un]employment is such a powerful weapon for ideological and behavioural conformity, police state practices are rarely employed. But they are employed. The public in general is unaware of it because they have not tested the state and they do not read the books and magazines that report coercive practices. Probably not very many people know about President Nixon's secret police organization known by the acronym COINTELPRO (counterintelligence program) designed to disrupt anti-Vietnam War protests. Nor do many people recognize the existence of political prisoners in the US--at least until they recall the incarceration of thousands of protesters during the civil rights movement. Today several members of the anti-nuclear Plowshares group are in prison, one, Helen Woodson, mother of a dozen children, sentenced to 16 years in prison. Political prisoners are treated harshly. One commentator has identified over 100 political prisoners in the US today (Bennett).

But employment and prison are only two weapons a democratic society uses to create unity ("indivisible" in the Pledge of Allegiance). Galbraith argues that not the coercive or pecuniary but the conditioning power of access, of communication, of education, and of the media is central to a modern polity like the US. In addition to the power of corporate and government pressures that produce self-censorship, the corporate state wields the even greater power of persuasion. Through wealth and leadership, information and attitudes can be so effectively organized that coercion will have only a supportive role in maintaining the status quo.

The wealth is concentrating. In 1986 1.6% of the population possessed almost 30% of nation's personal wealth, controlled considerably more, and the process continues. We are discussing trillions of dollars, of course. Likewise, ownership of information is increasingly monopolized. In 1982 50 corporations controlled most of the media business; by 1987 the number was 27 and narrowing. The wealth, the leadership, the organization naturally condition the education system, which shares with media as the corporate state's most important instrument of indoctrination in the values of the dominant elites.

Opposition to such a state is made difficult by the very pervasiveness of such organized power: even the language is affected and therefore people's sense of reality. It is extremely difficult for

most of us to think, for example, about alternatives to family life and child care, so limited is the language and therefore the ideas available through our media and education.

Uncle Sam is what powerful individuals and institutions iterate every minute in tens of thousands of ways. Miss Liberty hums commercials and during the Gulf War displayed yellow ribbons. A major institution of opposition, Christianity, has been nationalized, patriotized, and militarized, and Christmas advertising has already started in September. Budweiser, the flag, F-14s, sports, and prayer all patriotically reinforce each other at the Superbowl. Folger's coffee and US helicopter gunships killed Salvadorians.

And much has been done in secret both through the massive classification of information and by covert actions both domestic and global; economic warfare, disinformation, destabilization of governments, tampering with elections, bribery of officials, sabotage, terror, and "low intensity" wars. One of the most hopeful initiatives for open government, the Freedom of Information Act, has been gradually eroded. The Reagan-Bush administrations disastrously restricted information to the public through secrecy and censorhip. Bill Moyers has even claimed that the Reagan-Bush administrations used the National Security Council to attempt a coup; that is, to create a secret government inside the White House unaccountable to Congress. It is called the Iran-Contra crimes; it was run by Col. North; he became a national hero.

President Eisenhower in his Farewell Address described the US as a military-industrial complex, but that label was inadequate then and is even less adequate today. For the corportate state embraces also the White House, education, and the media. For example, NASA space programs are among the most heavily televised of events. This is no coincidence. RCA (which owns NBC), General Tire, the Avco Corp. and many other leading advertisers of space programs are chief beneficiaries of those progams. When you watch a NASA program you are witnessing the resolute determination with which the military-industrial-media complex tirelessly presses space flight upon the public. The Apollo moon shot, for example, the most expensive and heavily televized NASA program up to that time, was a joint enterprise of the conglomerates that included broadcasting.

If you multiply these examples by the tens of thousands (provided by my bibliographies on information control and political prisoners) you glimpse how power works to create consensus in the U.S. It is a power directed by the giant corporations. These increasingly concentrated powers support each other in influencing the national government. An elite of corporate, government, and educational officials, with the acquiescence or weakness of labour, run the system. But because it is so multifarious (no U.S. Mussolini speaks larger than life from his Balcony), it is virtually invisible to most citizens. The corporate state works through congeries of institutions: the two political parties, the military bureaucracies, the intelligence agencies, the executive branch, the Security Council, secrecy, selective anticommunism, universities, churches, think tanks, foundations, professional associations, cultural organizations, media, popular art, television, films, museums, libraries, theaters, and classism, sexism, and racism, all intertwined through the fusion of political and economic power. But at the basis of it all, the U.S. is corporate America, and all activities come so much under its influence, that the system seems right and natural. And it is thoroughly legal, case law having been built up for a hundred years to strengthen the values of those who hold economic wealth.

FIRST AMENDMENT IN THE CORPORATE STATE

But the US is not only this corporate state. There are countervailing powers of individual liberty and participatory democracy. Against the pecuniary, coercive, and persuasive power of the corporate state we enjoy the protection of the Bill of Rights and expecially its First Amendment, which to Justice Hugo Black was "the heart of the Bill of Rights." "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." The purpose of this requirement is to defend a democracy in which government is responsive to popular will. The system of freedom of expression has been persuasively defended by Thomas Emerson. Its four main premises--to assure individual self - fulfillment, to advance knowledge and discover truth, to provide for participation in decision making by all members of society, and to preserve political stability -- have all depended upon the First Amendment in varying degrees.

In our democracy we count on controversy protected by the Bill of Rights. But the mere statement of rights will not preserve and

strengthen democracy; those rights assured us in writing must be realized in actions. Fortunately, they have been, particularly through the American Civil Liberties Union. Born out of the struggle for free speech during WW1, the ACLU has been at the center of the struggle for real individual rights ever since -- for protection against arbitrary government, freedom of speech and press, separation of church and state, free exercise of religion, due process of law, equal protection of all people before the law, and privacy. Today, a substantial body of law exists in all areas of civil liberties, thanks to all those people for whom liberty was an ideal worth struggling for. We can look back at the growth of tolerance for different ideas and people, at the end of some of the worst forms of racial discrimination, and at a strengthened sense of privacy.

But my argument has been intended to show that popular government of an open society is hindered and often nullified by powerful institutions and practices over and above laws restrictive of speech or press. Not only government but corporations restrict thought, speech, and press by a system of persuasion, of which laws constitute only a small influence. The intellectual freedom affirmed by the First Amendment is intended to insure the dissemination of all views as the necessary precondition of self-realization, the discovery of truth, and a genuinely free popular will. But I have suggested how difficult it is to achieve that freedom in institutions or in national discourse. Justice Black envisioned a free, democratic society whose heart was the marketplace of conflicting ideas. A fully informed populace would be self-governing. The main danger to the intellectual marketplace and therefore to democracy would be any interference with its operation, any qualification of the competition of ideas. But I have suggested how the corporate state not merely intervenes directly to limit ideas, but works systematically to prevent dissenting ideas from ever occurring. The growing complexity of the issues requires the availability of more information and from diverse perspectives, if the citizen is to judge and vote rationally. But the concentration of power has resulted in the concentration of information under the control of institutions that inherently operate within their own framework to shut the public out. It was Thomas Emerson's opinion in 1970 that little had been done to meet these problems. They only worsened during the 1980s.

Remedies I: A Militant First Amendment

And yet something can be done in addition to the struggle for libertarian case law. Bill Moyers managed to show impeachable offenses by Presidents Reagan and Bush over public television. Despite massive government propaganda the majority of US citizens opposed the CIA invasion of Nicaragua. Information does get through.

But obviously much more must be done to support the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights. For the presidents are not only not impeached, they are popular. The Gulf War involved unprecedented censorship of our press, yet Bush reached the extraordinarily high rating of 90% approval. And the atrocities in Nicaragua paid for by the US government persist today in El Salvador and Guatemala.

But as our understanding of the pecuniary, coercive, and persuasive power of great institutions deepens, and as the judiciary continues its turn rightward, our awareness of the limits to what the ACLU can accomplish through Constitutional law becomes clearer. Again the First Amendment is crucial. Not its prohibition of restrictive laws, but through the activist interpretation of a Hugo Black, the First Amendment is a call to exercise the greatest possible variety of antagonistic opinions -- the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources for the discovery of truth and establishement of justice. If we are to overcome the extreme inequality of access of alternative views which I described earlier, in a country in which a billion dollar corporation with its incalculably enormous pecuniary and persuasive power also enjoys First Amendment rights as though it were a citizen, or in which the military establishment spent $35.8 million dollars in 1984 for propaganda, we must make our struggle on the basis of a militant First Amendment.

Ideally, the government has a supportive role, though you will anticipate my skepticism as to how libertarian it might be. The great First Amendment scholar, Thomas Emerson, looked to the state to assert a system of free expression beyond the avoidance of restrictive laws. Emerson would have the state not only protect expression from corporate and government interference, but he expected the state to promote freedom of expression by "furnishing facilities, eliminating distortions in the media of communication, or making information available." In this spirit, Congress passed a law to protect whistleblowers in government, and our government agencies do provide considerable information essential to democratic decision

making.

But I have suggested how massively the government and the corporations are engaged not in eliminating informational distortion but in manufacturing it, and how much they censor and keep secret. As Emerson concedes, many of our problems originate in the increasing persuasive power of large organizations, "new to our time" and "not readily answered on the basis of past theory or experience" (4). The obvious illustration of combined pecuniary, coercive, and persuasive power in the corporate realm is product, image, and advocacy advertising and advertiser/sponsor influence over media content. An illuminating example of government's persuasive power is the successful campaign by the White House, the CIA and FBI, and other agencies, and Congress, to convince the mainstream media and through them the public that small acts of violence against US citizens constitute terrorism, while massive invasions by the US (Guatemala, Libya, Nicaragua, Grenada, Panama) does not.

Remedies II: Individual Actions

Because systems of modern advertising or government propaganda seem to overwhelm the marketplace of ideas and the legal protections of individual freedom built up through First Amendment premises, ACLU litigation, and court rulings, we must find additional strategies of defense (Alinsky, Dellinger, McCarry, Seeger). The following single program of three projects will help: exposure, access, and change.

First, more of us must become engaged in exposing the realities of the corporate state--the S&L crimes, the manipulations of corporate and political advertising, the global covert operations, the countless pressures of censorship, secret government. Citizens living in a nation with a Bill of Rights are fortunate in having always before us the promise of what we might be in contrast to what we are--for example, the promise of liberty and equality and the practice of secrecy and privilege. The contradictions are a powerful leverage for change, for they offend all who abhor deceit and abuse in high places, and that includes our Hebrew-Christian, our literary, and our journalistic traditions. Because of high standards of equity and veracity, we are seeing the growth of investigative journalism. Many individuals,

magazines, book publishers, film makers, and song writers expose secrecy, censorship, and chicanery. Resistance to arrogant power requires knowledge. So we must reach out actively to those sources that expose power: the magazines that watch the CIA and Pentagon, the magazines that watch the media (Columbia Journalism Review, St. Louis Journalism Review, Extra!, Media and Values), the magazine that reports on political prisoners, all essential to a strong First Amendment, and their knowledge depending upon our support for their existence. We must use libraries, but we must also support exposure by subscribing to these magazines and buying these books that reveal the corporate state. For example, Adbusters, the only magazine in North America devoted solely to exposing lying and greed in advertising, survives on a shoe-string.

Second, we must gain access for our knowledge. It is much, but not enough to be only an investigator of power, a reader of magazines and books that offer alternatives. We can sell or give those magazines and books. We can express our knowledge in writing or speech to others even if only to one other person by letter. We can also write letters to newspapers and magazines, we can write op-ed articles, we can speak over our community television, join groups and speak up, start our own newsletter. We have all heard of George Seldes and I.F.Stone, great single investigators. Less known were Bill Nigut in Chicago and Roldo Bartimole of Cleveland, who wrote, typed, printed, and distributed their excoriations of deceit and greed. Two individuals created an archive on government secrecy to assist investigators in making FOIA requests. Other individuals have learned how to make films. One individual created a weekly poster. We can learn to draw cartoons. We can all make jokes.

And finally, our efforts to become informed and gain access for our information -- the struggle to expand and strengthen the diversity of views under a meaningful First Amendment - must be directed toward changing institutions. For example, the institution of militarism. Although the military establishment is perhaps the most powerful single institution in the world, it was watched for a few years by only one meagerly funded, mimeographed magazine, named Recon (unfortunately now defunct). You and I might not have been able to expose and thereby to change the Pentagon's annual report on Soviet Military Power , published each year to persuade Congress to pass the Pentagon's budget, but we can try to change the militarism that envelops us. An effective First Amendment requires thousands of

watchers of the military machine, which affects every locality. We can read documents, we can count, we can write, and we can speak to the people who support that military power in the schools, churches, organizations, and businesses, to change the structures which support militarism on a local level.

One more example, regarding newspapers. One magazine (unfortunately now defunct) watched the New York Times exclusively. The magazine was Lies of Our Times, and its purpose was to change the Times, just as Recon sought to change the Pentagon or CIA Watch to change the CIA, not only by exposing and thereby in the future preventing the Times' "literal falsehoods" but by revealing realities and perspectives the Times has ignored or misinterpreted. By correcting the record presented by our media, we too can help change the powers of persuasion. (These magazines need to be revived, and others like them created.)

As I was writing this, while another effort to legislate against "flag desecration" was mindlessly working its way through Congress (confusing flag with Constitution, symbol with reality) I asked myself what institution might I work toward changing, and the Pledge of Allegiance and the "Star-Spangled Banner" came immediately to mind. The cartoonist Matt Groening roasted the recurrent spirit of repression in the nation with his "The New Pledge" (1994):

> I pledge allegiance to and wrap myself in the flag of the United States Against Anything Un-American, and to the Republicans for which it stands, two nations, under Jesus, rich against poor, with curtailed liberty and justice for all, except blacks, homosexuals, women who want abortions, Communists, welfare queens, treehuggers, feminazis, illegal immigrants, children of illegal immigrants, and you if you don't watch your step.

But the chauvinism, authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism of the present pledge sufficiently oppose the affirmative charge of the First Amendment to enrich the flow of ideas to warrant rewording (Baer). Here is my revised pledge:

> I pledge allegiance to the Constitution
> Of the United States of America
> And to the diversity, toleration

And freedom of dissent for which it stands,
With liberty, justice, equity, and
The opportunity for happiness for all.

But even this more democratic wording remains nationalistically myopic. Better would be a pledge to the Earth Flag Declaration, which derives from the U.N.Declaration of Human Rights. The last of its fifteen priciples declares: "Everyone has the responsibility to nurture, protect, and defend the Earth and its inhabitants, and to create a more sustainable, just, and peaceful world for all."

Instead of the martial "Banner," give me Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Our Land." Instead of "the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air" (which is also unsingable), let us sing: "This land was made for you and me" (Klein). Join with me? Or create your own action.

James R. Bennett

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ZAPATISTAS

An issue that concerns us all.*

The New Year in Mexico is celebrated with less euphoria than here by it is still a good excuse to make a night of it.. So on the first of January 1994 the President and his ministers were trying hard to explain the images that invaded the T.V screen: an army of "Marsians" had occupied 16 municipalities of Chiapas, a southeastern state in which is San Cristobal de las Casas, a city of nearly 100, 000 inhabitants, praised in all tourist guides as one of the most beautiful places in the Latin American continent.. An impeccable plan of attack, with a limited number of human losses, was executed by thousands of peasants accompanied by a minority of mestizos. Armed with old rifles, some submachine guns, machetes, sticks with knives tied at the end of them, organized as a popular militia, disciplined and wearing, apparantly, uniforms, not many shoes mostly gum boots, they tried to present themselves as an army of self-defence forced into attack. Without a shot they occupied government buildings, barracks, jails and community archives, burning the files which represented the various abuses of the landlords, who had occupied the land which belonged to indigenous communities and legalized their theft by obliging officially stamped documents. Taken by surprise the devastated members of the government took two days to react with proclamations and communiques, with general bewilderment and embarrassment.

On that sunny morning, among groups of tourists and dumbstricken journalists, one person stood out in an unusual way: mestizo, Mexican but not from Chiapas, with a black balaclava like the majority of the insurgents, he introduced himself as Marcos with an ironic qualification of "subcommander", vicecommander, explaining that the grade of the subordinate was due to the fact that he was only a spokesperson since those who command were Indian communities, not specific leaders, and he was chosen because, unlike the great part of the insurgents, he spoke Spanish as well as the Maya language. But since they were an army calling themselves Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional it was necessary for someone to be responsible for military actions and he, Marcos, was one of them. But he made it clear in front of the T.V. cameras and recorders that he was not a "leader" nor manager, because the revolt concerned all the peasant

population, self governed by way of assembley. It was a punch in the stomach to the new liberalism of Salina de Gortari, the technocrat president, Harvard laureat in economics, and a blow in the face to the established image of the Latin American guerrilla: a popular army which expresses itself in anti militaristic terms, with a "declaration of war" which preferred irony to the authoritarian and warlike official proclamations.

At this point a digression is necessary since the 1st of January was not like all the other New Years, but the fateful date on which came into effect the Free Trade Agreement among the United States, Canada and Mexico: the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA.

GOD - THE MARKET.

In the 80s the foreign policy of the US underwent a radical change, especially in relation to Latin America. The military dictatorships, supported by Washington even if not established by its direct intervention, began to be inconvenient either due to reasons of image (the collapse of the eastern totalitarian regimes created an image problem for the West) or for capitalism's aim of a globalization of the economy. People like Pinochet of Chile, Videla, Massera and Galtieri of Argentina, as the military upper crust of Central America, even though they had delivered the resources into the hands of multinational enterprises of American mould, had not been economically reliable to the new God - the Market and his absolute religion, New Liberalism. Therefore, the thugs trained in the military academies of the US, where they learnt "interrogation techniques" but nothing relating to the stock exchange trend and limitation of public expenditure, had been replaced by technocrats with economic degrees: the school changed but not the aims.

If at first the political arena was invaded, and devastated, by genocidal generals, we now see the entrance into the arena of economist trained in furthering the interests of the North. It was the triumph of the so-called "Rules of Washington", according to the expression coined by John Williamson of the International Institute of Economics, where Washington stands, not only for the headquarters of the government, but also for a center around which rotates the I.M.F, the World Bank and where all finance ministers meet to decide short and medium term strategies. Such "rules", to put it simply, are

based on the conviction that confidence in free trade economic policy and a strong currency are the key to economic development. Sure in that, the economic graduates, installed in the place of politicians, have blindly believed the instructions of Washington. Without taking into account that, for the recalcitrants, the I.M.F. and World Bank can always wave the spectre of a foreign debt that has reached frightening annual tax increases, impossible to pay unless the imposed conditions are accepted.

In Mexico all of this was nearly wrecked at the beginning when in the 1988 elections, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, a candidate backed by the Monetary Fund, had to resort to electoral fraud to secure his victory over Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, the leader of the left opposition and son of Lazaro Cardenas, the president who in the 30's had the courage to nationalize petrol, taking it away from the control of the US, and who initiated a land reform which, even if it remained incompleted, brought the country to the precept of the post revolutionary constitution. Now a sigh of relief, since Washington could count on a new liberal technocrat in charge of the country so stategically important to its interests. This beginning of a descent into an abyss has for five years appeared to an economic miracle. The savage privatization, from banks to industries, has hit even the most efficient ones, for example telephone and transport companies, and opened the country to imports and made the Stock Exchange the most profitable in the world. But for whom?

The low return on interest in most developed countries has encouraged investors to search for new markets in the so-called Third World, and Mexico quickly became their Mecca, where the speculators earned obscene sums. But not a single dollar was reinvested in Mexican industries, while US enterprises continued to exploit the phenomenon of the"maquiladoras", assembly factories close to the border where crude oil products underwent transformations without any regard to the rigid anti-pollution norms operating in the US. While the Stock Exchange climbed to a vortex of staggering figures, the national funds were emptying at a similar rate: from 30 billions Mexico was left with less than 6, due to unrestrained imports and declining exports, and the devaluation of the peso by only 13% in a country where prices had increased by 63%. A speculative bubble destined to burst out with devastating effects.

THE FINAL COLLAPSE

And yet some persisted in believing that patience was needed since the new liberal model could not be wrong. But as an authoritative economist has recently written, what's more an American one, namely Paul Krugman, a lecturer at Stanford University: "One believes certain things because all the important people tell them and they are told since all the important people believe them: in reality when a conventional thesis becomes popular, the approval of it by a person is a proof that s/he can be taken seriously". Devastating but true. And this happened to Salinas de Gortari. He was never able to question that what he learned at Harvard might be wrong: and how could he doubt when "important people" in Washington supported it? He let himself be convinced that joining NAFTA could lead Mexico to the El Dorado of the First World ... It mattered little that poverty was increasing alarmingly, that cholera and malaria were reappearing in a country that was a leader in prevention and prophylaxis, the essential thing was to stand firm so that the miracle could be consolidated. Thus the final collapse was reached.

The perverse mechanism set in motion forced him into a corner: to make Mexican industries more competitive and to prevent the spiral emptying of the state's funds, the peso had to be devalued. But, since a sound currency was his battle cry, with presidential elections not far away, Salinas could not devalue, especially after losing credibility based on the speculative bubble and the possible defeat of the candidate chosen by him. Certainly he could postpone the reckoning with the electorate but he could not deceive the cynical mechanism of the Stock Exchange's speculation. Taking into consideration that big investors are the managers of pensioners' funds, the real owners of the present geofinance, that in the US alone accounts for some $6,000 billions, the counter-blow caused by the shifting of such capital had apocalyptic results.

In a few hours the Mexican economy went from miracle to disaster, in the time it takes to key-in a computer thousands of billion of dollars went elsewhere. And this without leaving in place any structure, any new enterprise, any glimmer of productive hope. This crash was used by Washington for its own benefit. To prevent the so-called "Tequila effect", that is the successive fall of Latin American economies, Washington gave Mexico the biggest loan in history: 50 billion dollars. But in exchange it obtained the legal "tutelage" of

Mexican petrol, that is, that anyone buying crude oil pays the amount not to Mexico but directly to the Federal Reserve of New York. A half-century history of pride and dignity was crushed in a few days. Two facts are sufficient to explain the target of the coup: US petrol reserves will last two to three years, while those of Mexico forty years.

CHIAPAS - THE UNCOUPLED CARRIAGE

To run faster the neo liberal engine counted on the more industrialized northern states with their modern agriculture while the traditionally poor and backward areas such as Chiapas, and also Oaxaca, Tabasco, Guerrero or Veracruz all became carriages to be crushed one after another (while the exploitation of natural resources continues). The majority of peasants in Chiapas are maya Indians belonging to ethnic tzotzil, itzeltal, tojolabal, chol, mam, motozintlec, chuj, jacaltlec, zoque and lacandon. For thousands of years they have lived in communities where decisions are taken together, by assemblies. They administered their own justice and cultivated the land without accepting the logic of profit: a field is cultivated until the requirements of the comunity are satisfied and not for the sake of profit accumulation. According to their culture land cannot be sold or acquired, since it is a common good.

The demand for hamburger meat has recently favoured the large landowners' abusive drive for huge pastures and the Indians have gradually been driven to the mountains where land is rugged and less fertile. The common maize field the "milpa", was a guarantee against misery. But since the coming into effect of the Free Trade Treaty (a contradiction in terms, since there is no free competition between the US and Mexico) the "milpa" has lost its "reason" to exist. The industrialized agricultures of Kansas and Oklahoma produce infinitely cheaper maize than Mexico and today we witnes an absurdity: Mexico imports maize from the North. This is a product which historically was exported to the rest of the world by the Spaniards who conquered the country five centuries ago. Here it was born, here it had nourished the population for milleniums, but now it no longer makes sense to cultivate it, according to the rules of the Market. This is one of the reasons the zapatistas rebelled exactly on 1st of January 1994 and announced to the world: "If we have to die from starvation, privation and diarrhoea it is better to go by the bullet: we hate the war, but you have to take the responsability for killing us directly, not leave misery

to do the task".

From the first speeches in San Cristobal, the spokesperson Marcos immediately clarified the libertarian content of the movement which was fashioned upon Zapata's lines, disassociating itself from "marxism, leninism, social-communism, castrism or any other ideology already defined; there is instead a common point of junction with the great national problems such as lack of freedom and democracy...". One who does not know, in depth, the history of Emiliano Zapata, his exploits and participation in the revolution of 1910 has to take into account that those events involved, as main actors, many figures of Mexican anarchism such as Ricardo Flores Magon and Praxedis Guerrero who left a libertarian imprint on the human and political parabola of Zapata. The fact that "heroes" of the revolution, like Zapata or Villa, were considered "generals" is deceptive since some of our parameters of evaluation cannot be applied in a neutral manner to the Mexican reality.

Even what here is considered as "nationalism" has a valency often diametrically opposite to ours. When zapatistas claim the Mexican flag as their own, they try to affirm a history of vehemence and pride in the face of foreign capital, against the bourgeois exploitation that sparked off the first revolution of this century: not a vacuous patriotism composed of symbols and ritual. "We have became soldiers so that one day soldiers will not be necessary. We have undertaken a sucidal move, that of a profession which is to disappear. Soldiers, who are soldiers in order that one day nobody will be a soldier. And this is the flag for which we have become soldiers" wrote Marcos in the name of the zapatistas. And if there are any doubts about the ideal which animated them, he adds: "We insist strongly on the issue 'Soldiers who are soldiers in order that it will no longer be necessary to be soldiers'. And when we say that we don't want power it is because it should not be a military in command of a society. Since a military bases his power on his job, on captains, majors, lieutenant colonels. Who has a military rank is not elected, but is promoted. Imagine what abberration can decide the death of somebody and something and a battle is: life or death. The worse that can happen is to have a military in government, including ourselves. The military logic is the most antidemocratic and inhuman that exists. And to compensate for this we dance. In this sense EZLN has a suicidal will, not in the sense of getting ourselves killed but in order to disappear as a military. The only advantage we have is that we realize what a turd of a thing

we are doing, we don't want to continue to be servicemen." It is the first time in the history of the armed movements in Latin America in the final half of this century, that thousands of men and women have taken to arms anouncing that they do not want power, not even any representatives in it, but primarily want to raise the awareness and consciousness of those who are not armed. "We consider the armed struggle not in a classical sense of the previous guerrillas, that is, the armed struggle as the only way, as the only omnipotent truth around which concentrates all, instead we have always considered the armed struggle, from the beginning, as a part of a series of processes or forms of struggle which evolve: in certain cases one is more important, in others, another is important". Nonetheless this 1st of January needed to be defended from government counter-attack, a fact which even now is not understood by many.

SOLDIERS AND NON SOLDIERS AND FIGHTING WOMEN

After trying clumsily to portray the zapatistas as a phenomenon orchestrated from outside, Carlos Salinas de Gortari was forced to admit that the rebels' reasons were valid, but after reaching this point he did not know how to react. While, on the one side, civil society began to mobilize in favour of the damned in Chiapas, on the other, the military machine was preparing for a counter-attack. The first T.V. images were showing soldiers discharging guns and ammunition with unconvincing expressions even perplexed and sad: the Mexican army continues to be moulded on the heroes of the revolution and it has never produced leaders of coups while a part of it does not even hide its sympathies for Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, since there are still generals and admirals who were intimate friends of his father and considered him as a symbol of the Mexican resistance to the "gringo's" arrogance. But the order was to restore "lawfulness" by dislocating the zapatistas from the occupied municipalities. Then other images were superimposed and the latter were showing the departure of the elite forces trained in the US with equipment inherited from the Gulf War.

The EZLN then retreated strategically from the town and surprised the government by attacking Rancho Nuevo, the most important military installation in the area.From those big barrack it was reported that, shortly before the insurrection, dozens of soldiers and non commissioned officers with all their weapons and personal

belongings had disappeared. Besides those, who had certainly joined the zapatistas, there were signs that many agents of the municipal police had left undefended the places assigned to them revealing, without doubt, support for the undertaking of the 1st January. As if everyone knew except the government. In turn in 12 bloody days, it was calculated that around 200 people, mostly civilians, were indiscriminately shot by the special units.

The battle that raged in Ocosingo was the most cruel, the paratroopers attacking the market and shooting wildly. Instead of retreating the zapatistas remained and fought to ensure that people could take shelter in their houses. That day a little revolution occurred within the revolt itself. Marcos' account: "There is a substantial difference among the rebel women "las insurgentas", as they are referred to by the comrades, and those of the villages. The insurgent women are light years in advance, have a spirit of initiative, for example in their relationships and issues of command. Before the war if a woman was in a commanding position she was distrusted by men. It was a mess and quarrels had to be continually soothed. The usual story: 'Because she is a woman I won't obey her, of course I won't'. This is the way that they were educated. How can one take an order from a woman. This is not done in the villages. But in the battle of Ocosingo the issue was solved. At Ocosingo the better fighters were women, it was they who carried the wounded from the 'surrounded areas'. Some still have splinters in their bodies. They took away the people and they took them away alive. And there the question was solved whether a woman can or cannot be in command of a unit."

WE WOMEN WANT...

The "women's issue" was always present within the EZLN. "Male culture" was imposed more because of backwardness and poverty than because of the Indian culture. The insurgent women have had a twofold task: to train as fighters and to make the male comrades aware of previously unconfronted problems. "When in March 1993 the Secret Indigenous Revolutionary Committee met, it was comrade Susana who read the demands summarising the thoughts of thousands of Indian women. She began to read it and as she continued the assembly became increasingly anxious. She said: 'We don't want to be forced to marry somebody we don't like, we want to have children we want and we can bring up. We want the right to get involved in community jobs. We want the right to speak out and be heard. We

want to study and even to become drivers.'

Heavy silence followed. The Women's Rights demands proclaimed by Susana was a revolution for the indigenous communities. The truth is: the first EZLN uprising that took place in March 1993 was headed by zapatista women. No losses were recorded and victory was achieved. Things happen like that in this part of the world."

To return to the fighting. On the 12th day a cease fire was declared, a unique event in the troubled Latin American circumstances, if one takes into account that the government soldiers stopped themselves when they were about to take over advantageous positions. It needs to be clarified that at the command of the military forces stationed in Chiapas was the general Miguel Angel Godinez Bravo, a co-student of the president Jose Lopez Portillo, the same one who recently broke the tacit undertaking imposed on former presidents not to interfere in national politics by declaring that neoliberalism is killing Mexico and urging the need to radically reverse an economic system which sells off the resources to speculators. Godinez Bravo is a military man who has preferred negotiations to war without quarter, stopping his own men without any attempt at revenge. Here, also Mexico differs from the rest of the continent.

The neotiations proceeded with a series of exhausting meetings with Bishop Samuel Ruiz as intermediary, a prelate who for years has distinguished himself as a defender of the oppressed and the marginalized, in particular the Indians, and who, as if by coincidence has the Vatican of Wojtila as his main enemy ... But the greatest efforts of the zapatistas were focussed towards so called "civil society", a variegated opposition unaffiliated to any party or official spokesperson. In August 1994 the National Democratic Convention took place in the heart of Lacandona Wood, a mass meeting that showed the organizational abilities of the zapatistas. But despite all the mobilization which had already involved the greatest part of the country, be it towns or rural areas, the Convention did not find that unity of intention hoped for by EZLN, concentrating instead on rivalries and internal fights induced by parties and factions.

IT IS UP TO ALL OF US TO MOBILIZE

The risk of irresolvable crisis occurred at the beginning of February 1995, when the new president, Zedillo, gave orders to the

army to attack. Why this unexpected change of attitude after a year of dialogue? There is a simple answer: the Chase Manhattan and Morgan Banks had sent a "secret" report to Zedillo stating that the areas occupied by the zapatistas are rich in petrol deposits; that Chiapas produces 30% of the electricity of the country (even if the majority of its people use candles and petrol lamps), with vast agrarian resources, besides valuable timber for export (the second lung of the planet to be plundered), and therefore ... either he takes total control or they will advise foreign investors not to invest in Mexico. In other words kill all of them and start it all over again. Zedillo, who in cartoons is drawn with one noose round his neck and another round his testicles, could not do anything else. But he has risked igniting a blaze which may envelop most of the country.

Thanks to information supplied by the CIA, the TV tried to portray the real face of Marcos: his name is Rafael Guillen Vicente, a sociologist who disappeared ten years ago. A useless discovery since immediately huge demonstrations took place in the capital city with thousands of people marching in balaclavas, chanting: "We are all Marcos". For the zapatistas covered faces have never been a security measure, on the contrary, it is out of a desire to not give anyone a chance to be a representative, because they do not favour "caudillosmo" and they do not create myths based on one or two individuals. The authorities, having no understanding of such richness of ideal, believed that the unmasking would be sufficient to cancel a myth that was not even desired. Nothing changed. And to the usual question; "who is Marcos?", Marcos answered: "Marcos is an Indian in Mexico, a black in South Africa, a gay in San Franscisco, a pacifist in Bosnia, a Palestinian in the occupied territories, an anarchist in the Spanish war, a woman alone in any Mexican metropolis on a Saturday night, an unhappy student, a Market Economics' dissident, an artist without a gallery and, naturally, a zapatista of south east Mexico. Marcos is anybody who is exploited, all who are marginalized, the oppressed minorities who resist and say: **ENOUGH!**." And again: "If you want to see the real face of Marcos take a mirror and look at us in it...".

Labouriously negotiations were entangled again. Mexico does not like a blood bath and even among soldiers and officials there are signs of discontent and unwillingness or open refusal to fire on those who are "our brothers". For the moment there is a small win for peace over war, a first planned agreement, a vague agreement, but

nonetheless an agreement. Hope hangs by a thread and zapatistas know that and affirm that fighting will not achieve their aims. But there is no return. Awareness is a fact. The people of Mexico have never renounced their dignity, that the myopic want to exchange for nationalism, and today many have realised the destruction that neoliberalism has carried out here and elsewhere.

But one has, unfortunately, to take into account present day reality: globalization of the economy does not leave any autonomy to any government and, even in Mexico, the movement towards chaos is dictated by the North. It is up to all of us to mobilize here and soon if we don't want them to be left alone. Their sacrifices are our concerns too.

Pino Cacucci

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